# Horticulture Tips
## August 2009

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

## GARDEN TIPS FOR AUGUST!

*David Hillock*

Vegetables

- August is a good month to start your fall vegetable garden. Bush beans, cucumbers and summer squash can be replanted for another crop. Beets, broccoli, carrots, potatoes, lettuce and other cool-season crops can also be planted at this time. (HLA-6009)
- Soak vegetable seed overnight prior to planting. Once planted, cover them with compost to avoid soil crusting. Mulch to keep planting bed moist and provide shade during initial establishment. Monitor and control insect pests that prevent a good start of plants in your fall garden.

Fruit and Nut

- Continue protective insect applications on the fruit orchard. A good spray schedule is often abandoned too early. Follow directions on last application prior to harvest. (EPP-7319)

Flowers

- Towards the end of the month, divide and replant spring-blooming perennials like iris, peonies and daylilies if needed.

General

- Water compost during extremely dry periods so that it remains active. Turn the pile to generate heat throughout for proper sterilization.
- Always follow directions on both synthetic and natural pesticide products.
- Watch for high populations of caterpillars, aphids, spider mites, thrips, scales and other insects on plant material in the garden and landscape and treat as needed. (EPP-7306)
- Water all plants thoroughly unless rainfall has been adequate. It is better to water more in depth, less often and early in the morning.

Trees and Shrubs

- Discontinue deadheading roses by mid-August to help initiate winter hardiness.
- Watch for 2$^{nd}$ generation of fall webworm in late August/early September. Remove webs that enclose branches and destroy; or spray with good penetration with an appropriate insecticide.

Lawn and Turf

- Grassy winter weeds like *Poa annua*, better known as annual bluegrass, can be prevented with a preemergence herbicide application in late August. Water in the product after application. (HLA-6420)

- Areas of turf with large brown spots should be checked for high numbers of grubs. Mid-to-late August is the best time to control heavy white grub infestations in the lawn. Apply appropriate insecticide if white grubs are a problem. Water product into soil. (EPP-7306)
- Tall fescue should be mowed at 3 inches during the hot summer and up to 3½ inches if it grows under heavier shade. (HLA-6420)
- For areas being converted to tall fescue this fall, begin spraying out bermudagrass with a product containing glyphosate in early August. (HLA-6419 & HLA-6421)
- Irrigated warm-season lawns can be fertilized once again; apply 0.5 lb N/1,000 sq ft in early to mid-August.
- Brown patch of cool-season grasses can be a problem. (HLA-6420)

## Dividing Perennials

*David Hillock*

As perennials mature they often need dividing to encourage vigor and continued performance. Luckily the plants provide us a few clues when it is time to divide them - smaller leaves and fewer flowers, weaker stems, the center becomes open and all the growth is on the perimeter of the clump or it may have just outgrown its spot.

The general rule for when a perennial should be divided is opposite its flowering time. So a plant that flowers in the spring can be divided after it flowers, usually in late summer or fall. Late August is a good time to start dividing these types of perennials in Oklahoma. Some plants don't care when they are divided, but in any case care should be taken to ensure survival of the new transplants.

Start by digging a trench around the outside of the clump and then lift the entire clump from the ground. Using a sharp knife or spade begin cutting the clump up into smaller clumps about the size of your fist or a gallon sized perennial. Each section should have at least three healthy buds or shoots.

Discard the older unproductive portions and the weak spindly portions and keep the more vigorous sections. Remove any diseased parts and make clean cuts to any damaged roots.

Prepare the area by digging wide, shallow holes to accommodate the roots. Place the plant sections in the holes by spreading the roots out over the ground and cover them back up. The crown of the plant should be at the same depth as it was before dividing it. Planting too deep may delay or completely hinder flowering of some species. Water the plants and keep the soil moist for several weeks to encourage new root growth.

If you have extras, share them with a friend.

# Turfgrass Management, Drought and White Grubs

*Justin Quetone Moss and Eric Rebek*

White grubs refer to the larvae of certain species of scarab beetles (Figure 1). White grubs damage turfgrasses by feeding directly on grass roots below the soil surface. If white grub populations are large enough, the turfgrass root system can be completely severed from the grass plant. Thus, turfgrasses with significant white grub damage can be easily pulled up from the ground, almost like a piece of new sod. Above ground, turfgrass leaf blades will turn brown and appear wilted. Severe white grub damage may be masked or confused with turfgrass drought stress during summer months. Certain species of white grub larvae become very active in August, especially those of southern masked chafer and Japanese beetle. In addition, August is typically an extremely dry month in Oklahoma. Therefore, initial damage to turfgrass roots from white grub larvae can be exacerbated by drought conditions, which can quickly lead to plant death. White grub populations should be monitored in areas where damage is suspected or has occurred historically by cutting and rolling back several blocks of turf measuring 1 square foot and counting the number of grubs encountered. If an average of five or more white grubs are found per square foot, treatment may be warranted. During August in Oklahoma, you may want to double check those brown patches in your yard for signs of drought stress and white grub damage. If you believe you have a white grub problem in your yard, contact your local OSU County Extension Educator for treatment and management options.

Figure 1. White grubs in soil. Photo courtesy of Dr. Tom Royer, Professor, OSU Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology.

# Go Suck-A-Bug!

*Shelley Mitchell*

*Suck-A-Bug. Gas Gobblers. Plant Parts Rap. Pinwheel Plants.* Intrigued? These are all activities from Junior Master Gardener™, a youth gardening curriculum developed at Texas A&M University and administered through the cooperative extension network. If you want to incorporate fun, inexpensive, environmental education activities into your child's schooling, look no further than Junior Master Gardener™. JMG™ is a gardening curriculum designed for grades 3 – 5 (Level 1) and 6 – 8 (Level 2), but the activities are suitable for K-12. JMG™ incorporates hands-on, project-based learning; leadership development; and community service. It is a flexible curriculum appropriate for families, camps, scout groups, after-school programs, schools and public gardens. Access to a garden or plot of land is preferable, but not required. The Level 1 curriculum encompasses eight areas: plant growth and development, soil and water, insects and diseases, environmental horticulture and ecology, vegetables and herbs, fruits and nuts, landscape horticulture and life skills and career exploration. Each chapter has a selection of group and individual activities. Activities include arts and crafts, games, field trips, backyard explorations, experiments, cooking and more. Many activities use items found in nature or around the house (film canisters, coat hangers, cookie cutters, paper plates, newspapers, window screens, etc.). Activities vary from 'quick and simple' (no supplies required) to more involved -- requiring more supplies and time (days, weeks). Do one activity or do them all-- it's your choice; the curriculum is flexible. The Level 2 curriculum has two different units: Operation Thistle™: Seeds of Despair, which covers plant growth and development, and Operation W.A.T.E.R™: Dr. Thistle Goes Underground, which covers soils and water.

In addition to the core curricula, there are several supplemental curricula at Level 1: Literature in the Garden™, Health and Nutrition in the Garden™ and Wildlife Gardener™. Literature in the Garden™ engages youth through activities based on garden- and ecology-themed children's books. The goal of the curriculum is to enhance understanding of the messages behind the stories. Health and Nutrition in the Garden™ has chapters in thrifty gardens, basic gardening, growing techniques, food safety, ABCs of healthy eating and healthy snacks. The activities aim to teach youth health, nutrition, food safety and decision-making skills. Wildlife Gardener™ helps youth understand wildlife and their needs, their contribution to the garden and their aesthetic value. Chapters in Wildlife Gardener™ include habitat gardening basics, essential elements, birds, mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians, wildlife habitat sites and life skills and career exploration.

It only takes five youth to form a registered JMG™ group! Registered groups get a certificate recognizing their group, a free page on the JMG™ website, and are entered into monthly drawings for garden-related prizes. In addition, registered youth can work toward various levels of certification in the curriculum. JMG™ registration is free, and the curriculum is inexpensive. Visit www.jmgkids.us for more information, to register a group or to order curriculum. Whether you are looking for activities to fill weeks, months, a whole summer, or even just one hour (or less), JMG™ is sure to have something that will fit your needs. The Oklahoma state coordinator for the Junior Master Gardener™ program is Shelley Mitchell, 4-H and Youth Development, OSU Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture. Contact information is shelley.mitchell@okstate.edu, (405) 744-5755.

## OSU Pocket Guide to Pecan Pests Now Available

*Eric T. Stafne*

A new publication from Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension is available to Oklahoma Pecan Growers. The title of the publication is "A Pocket Guide to Oklahoma Pecan Diseases, Insects, and Other Disorders". This work was a cooperative effort of several authors from Oklahoma State University and from the Noble Foundation. The guide represents the most common pests of pecans in Oklahoma. There are descriptions and photos of 13 different pecan diseases, 18 pecan insect pests, and 14 disorders.

Guides can be obtained by mailing a request to the OSU Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department. To cover the cost of postage send a check for $5.00 made out to "OSU Horticulture & LA Dept.". Send the check to: OSU Horticulture and LA Dept., Attn: Stephanie Larimer, 358 Ag Hall, Stillwater, OK 74074-6027.

If you have any questions about the order process, you may call Stephanie at 405-744-5404. About 500 copies of the book were published through funding of the Team Initiative Program (TIP) at OSU, the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, and also funds from the Oklahoma Pecan Growers' Association. We hope the book will be useful to you – please let us know what you think. Because of the size, number of photos, and cost of the publication it will not be immediately available on-line for download.

## Upcoming Horticulture Events

**Tree Care Conference**
October 28, 2009, OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater

**Global Horticulture**
December 2, 2009, Stillwater

For more information about upcoming events, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu.